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THE AMERICAN AS HE IS

BY

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PRESIDENT OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK

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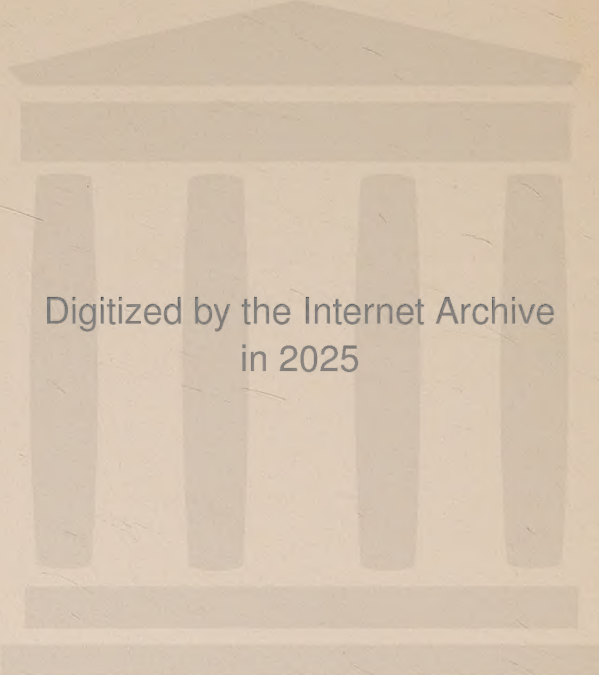
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TO THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

WHOSE BENEFICENT ACTIVITY BEGAN

BEFORE AMERICA WAS DISCOVERED



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THE chapters of this book were delivered as *Preface* lectures before the University of Copenhagen in September, 1908, in response to the invitation of the Rector and Faculty of that University.

It is not easy to speak dispassionately of the institutions and the civilization of one's own country. The most ardent patriot sees many things that he would improve; the most detached critic feels many things that are surpassingly good. Only the historian of the future can hold the balance even between the strong and the weak aspects of a nation's life. My task was less ambitious and less difficult. It was to respond as best I could to the invitation of a sister university, rich in years and in service to scholarship and to science, to set out some of the aspects of American life and to draw, in large lines, a picture of that part of present-day civilization which the world knows as American.

Preface

For a genuine understanding of the government and of the intellectual and moral temper of the people of the United States, one must know thoroughly and well the writings and speeches of three Americans, — Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
October 20, 1908.

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THE AMERICAN AS A POLITICAL TYPE

The truth is that the general genius of a government is all that can be substantially relied upon for permanent effects. Particular provisions, though not altogether useless, have far less virtue and efficiency than are commonly ascribed to them; and the want of them will never be, with men of sound discernment, a decisive objection to any plan which exhibits the leading characters of a good government. — ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

THE AMERICAN AS A POLITICAL TYPE

THE most impressive fact in American life is the substantial unity of view in regard to the fundamental questions of government and of conduct among a population so large, distributed over an area so wide, recruited from sources so many and so diverse, living under conditions so widely different. There is an American type of mind, complex not simple, discernible underneath the many individual differences that varying conditions of life, education, occupation, and climate have brought about. This unity amid so much diversity is itself a very impressive fact, and the causes that produced it are important to know.

The first and chief cause is the extraordinary persistence of the Anglo-Saxon impulse, which brought the United States of America into exist-

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*Persistence
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ence. For the origin of that impulse one must go back to the Teutonic qualities and characteristics of the people so admirably described by Tacitus in his *Germania* as *propriam et sinceram et tantum sui similem gentem*. It was in northern Europe, between the Vistula and the Rhine, two thousand years ago, that the impulse which finally made a great nation on the North American continent took its origin. It grew in strength as it was developed by conflict and by self-expression in institutions, local and national. In England it drew to itself elements from the Dane, the Norman, and the Frank, and welded them all into one. Throughout English history it struggled on, sometimes checked, but never conquered, until it established parliamentary government, put limitations upon the once absolute monarchy, worked out a massive body of common law to regulate the dealings of man with man, and laid the foundations of an economic and industrial system in which every opportunity was accorded to individual initiative and in which individual excellence was protected in the possession of its gains. It distinguished liberty from license, and it grew

to have a profound regard for law and order and to prefer the rule of justice to that of might. *The American as a Political Type*

In America it laid the foundations of a democracy which conformed to the fine definition of Pasteur. "Democracy," said he, "is that order in the state which permits each individual to put forth his utmost effort." It is this original Anglo-Saxon impulse which finds expression in the early colonial life of America, and which gives form alike to the Mayflower compact of 1620, to the Declaration of Rights of 1765, to the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms of 1775, to the Declaration of Independence of 1776, to the Ordinance for the Government of the Northwest Territory of 1787, and finally to the Constitution of the United States itself. This impulse persists to this day and is the underlying and controlling fact in American life. It has furnished the warp through which the shuttle of time and of changing events has carried the threads which are American history.

Despite the large Irish, German, Slavic, Italian, Scandinavian, and Jewish additions to the original

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American population, the Anglo-Saxon impulse holds its own. In America it is repeating on a larger scale the history of England, and it is drawing to itself support and strength from the other and varied nationalities that are there joined to it. The English language overrules the immigrant's native tongue, if not in the first generation, certainly in the second, and the English common law, with its statutory amendments and additions, displaces the immigrant's customs of life and trade with a rapidity that is truly astonishing.

It would be hard to find under any single flag, individuals more widely different than the urban and urbane dweller on the Atlantic or Pacific seaboard, the easy-going Southern planter, the rude and rugged mountaineer of East Tennessee, and the restless and often turbulent plainsman; but common to them all is the English tongue and the sense of justice, fair play, and personal liberty which are at the bottom of the English common law. This is the first and chief cause of the unity which underlies the divergent American types.

In addition to the persistence of this Anglo-Saxon impulse, certain binding and unifying forces have been at work in the United States for more than a century. One of the most important of these is the continuing interstate migration, which still goes on and which has built up the newer States and Territories on the lines of the older ones. States like New York, Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Tennessee have sent hundreds of thousands of the most ambitious of their youth to build up, first the Middle West, then the plains, and then the Pacific slope; California, Texas, Kansas, and Oklahoma are notable examples of great Commonwealths built up in this way. For the most part this interstate migration has taken place along east and west lines. Massachusetts and Vermont sent their pioneering elements to western New York and northern Ohio, and these in turn sent theirs to Illinois and Iowa, and then these sent theirs still farther west, for the most part along the same parallels of latitude. It is no unusual thing in America to find a family of which the grandparents live in New England or New

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**Effect of
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migration**

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York, the parents in the Middle West, and some or all of the children in the Rocky Mountain States or in Oklahoma or Texas.

By the census of 1900 it was shown that twenty-one per cent of the total native-born element of the population had emigrated from the State or Territory in which they were born, and were found living in other States and Territories. It may be doubted whether any similar phenomenon is to be found in any other country. In a nation spread over so large an area as the United States it is plain that the influence of this large interstate migration as a unifying force is very great.

**Influence
of voluntary
organizations**

Still another influence which binds together the widely separated parts of the nation and assists the development of a common consciousness among the American people, is that exerted by the large number of important voluntary organizations of various kinds that are national in scope and aim. The periodical meetings of these various voluntary organizations bring together representative men from all parts of the country, and through their exchange of ideas and personal friendships they act upon public opinion in many

ways, some of them hardly noticeable at the time, but all of which assist in building up a common national consciousness and a common national interest. These voluntary organizations are very numerous. The more important are those which are educational, religious, philanthropic, or scientific in character, but the influence of those whose purpose is merely social or fraternal is also too significant to be overlooked.

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Skill in organization and aptitude for it are very common among Americans. Their parliamentary procedure is well developed and generally understood by the people. Their voluntary organizations are conducted in accordance with the established principles of parliamentary law, and these organizations provide an excellent training ground for many of those who afterwards rise to important places in public life.

The Americans are great newspaper readers. Nowhere else are so many newspapers published as in the United States. Of the sixty thousand newspapers now published in the world, nearly twenty thousand are published in the United

*The news-
paper press*

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States. More than sixteen thousand of these are published once each week, and it is these weekly newspapers that penetrate into the remotest hamlets, carrying a digest of the news of the world furnished by the well-organized press associations and newspaper syndicates. These weekly newspapers do not as a rule give so much space to news of a purely sensational nature or to the chronicle of vice and crime as do the daily newspapers of the large cities, whose numerous editions are eagerly read by hundreds of thousands of persons. With a few noteworthy exceptions, the best and most creditable American newspapers are to be found in cities of from fifty thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. Some of the larger cities are sadly lacking in daily newspapers that are in all respects worthy. As a rule, the American newspapers give a relatively large amount of space to foreign news, with the result that as a whole the American people are much better informed about foreign countries than the people of foreign countries are about them.

The newspapers assist powerfully in building

a common national consciousness, because they provide substantially the same food for reflection to all the people. Their editorial discussions of current events are, in very many cases, written by men of education and fine feeling, and abound in evidences of information and good judgment.

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Unfortunately, there are to be found in some of the large cities daily newspapers of a quite different type. Their purpose is to exploit the people, either for gain or for the political advancement of their owners or managers. In order to exploit the people these newspapers must gain their ear. They do this, first, by appealing to the lower and baser feelings and instincts of their readers, by furnishing news or alleged news which either satisfies a prurient and unhealthy curiosity or excites envy, hatred, and malice toward the conspicuous or the well-to-do; second, by claiming to perform — and occasionally by actually performing — a public service in connection with a law or administrative measure which has been proposed in the public interest, but which meets with the opposition of some privileged person or group. Having by these or similar

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methods built up a large constituency, the conductors of these newspapers attempt to use their readers to serve their own or the newspaper's interest. Sometimes they are successful, but only temporarily so. Such deception and such selfish misuse of power cannot continue to be successful indefinitely.

The critic of the American newspaper should not judge it by its worst examples. They are noisy, but not numerous. At its best, or even in its average, state, the American newspaper is conducted with sobriety and with a due sense of responsibility as an institution powerful for good or evil in a democratic community. It, too, is a unifying force of the highest importance in the nation.

**The political
parties**

The two great political parties, the Republican and the Democratic, operate as a unifying force of the first magnitude. Nowhere else, save perhaps in Great Britain, is attachment to party name and party symbol so strong as in the United States. A party may wholly change its principles and its point of view, as, for example, the Democratic party has done since the candidacies

of Tilden in 1876 and of Cleveland in 1884, 1888, and 1892, — and yet the great mass of Democrats continue to follow, year after year, the old name and the old symbol despite the changed leadership and the altered programme. This fact indicates that in the United States party membership and party loyalty are often more a matter of sentiment and association than of political conviction; and such indeed is the case. From habit and difference of temperament two men quite in accord on most political questions will frequently vote for opposing candidates and policies.

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Perhaps one in ten of the voting population — in some communities as many as one in five — hold themselves wholly aloof from party organization and vote each year as their judgment at the moment dictates. They constitute the so-called independent vote, and as the power to determine the result of a given election is often in their hands, their support is more eagerly and more anxiously sought by party managers than these managers are always willing to admit.

Nevertheless, the party organizations are very

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powerful, and of late years they have been generally recognized by law in the enactments of the various States in regard to the supervision and control of elections and the steps preliminary thereto. Members of a given party organization are drawn closely together by interest and sympathy, no matter how far apart their homes may be. A prominent Democrat of Texas is a welcome guest of his fellow-partisans in New York or Massachusetts, and a distinguished Republican from Maine is greeted as an old and valued friend by the Republicans of Illinois or California.

The great national conventions of the two parties, which meet once in four years to nominate candidates for President and Vice-President and to adopt a declaration of principles — or platform, as it is called, — are the most characteristic gatherings known to American politics. They are wholly unknown to the Constitution and the laws, and their existence and importance illustrate very well the capacity of the American to adapt himself and his institutions to changed circumstances and conditions. By the terms of

the Constitution, the President and Vice-President were to be chosen, not by the voting masses at all, but by electors chosen by the voters of the several States. It was the theory of the Constitution that these electors would deliberate and select as President and Vice-President the persons in their judgment best fitted for these high offices. But after Andrew Jackson's time (1828-1836), when the presidency first took on the commanding position that it has since occupied in American politics, the voting masses, in order to control the selection of the party candidates, developed the system of national nominating conventions, consisting of delegates chosen by the voters belonging to a given party in the several States. The choice of the party's nominating convention then became morally obligatory upon the electors chosen by that party's voters. In this way, the electors — the Electoral College, as they are collectively known — lost their constitutional functions entirely, and they now register, in a purely perfunctory manner, the will of the party to which they belong. It is probable that before many years precisely the

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same process will be gone through with as to the election of United States senators. Senators are now chosen by the several State legislatures, as the Constitution provides; but State conventions of delegates chosen by the voting masses are already assuming the right to dictate to the legislature a party candidate for senator, and before long the legislatures, or most of them, when they elect senators, will doubtless act quite as perfunctorily as the Electoral College does now.

It is plain, therefore, that both as to the election of President and Vice-President and as to the election of senators, the people, operating through the parties and through the party organizations, have altered and are altering the provisions of the Constitution, without formal amendment, in a way that makes the choice of these high officers respond as directly as possible to the people's will.

Moreover, the parties and the party organizations have brought about a substantial uniformity of the forms of political action in all parts of the country. Even a specific legislative proposal,

the principle of which is supported by a political party for the time dominant, is likely to appear in much the same form and language upon the statute books of several States. Since the party organizations are constantly at work, not only at times of election, but at all times, it is obvious that their part in developing a common national consciousness is a highly important one.

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The government of the United States as established by the Constitution, and the progressive development of the nation's political consciousness that has taken place under it, have exerted a steady pressure, for more than a hundred years, toward the making and the strengthening of a common national type and a common national point of view. Every appropriation of money by the Congress for a public building in a city or town, for the improvement of a river or harbor for purposes of navigation, for the extension of the postal service to rural districts, for the irrigation of arid lands in the West and Southwest, or for the beneficent work of the Department of Agriculture, leads the part immediately affected or benefited to lean more heavily upon the whole.

**The govern-
ment as a
unifying
force**

Circumstances have built in the United States a nation far more solid, far more unified, and far more centralized than was thought to be possible when the Constitution was framed.

The circumstances which have worked together to this end have been in no small part political, but they have also been in large part economic. As Professor Burgess has so convincingly shown,¹ the individual liberty of a citizen of the United States is national in its origin, content, and sanction. One may think himself a Rhode Islander, a Virginian, or a Californian first, and an American afterwards, but if he analyzes carefully the question of his civil liberty, its guarantees, and its defender, he will soon find that he is primarily a citizen of the United States and that the Constitution of the United States is his ultimate protector. It is this political fact which gives to the Constitution such supreme importance. If, like the French constitution, the Constitution of the United States merely created a government and prescribed the functions of its several parts, it

¹ Burgess, *Political Science and Constitutional Law* (1890), I:184 *et seq.*

would be a far less vital document than it really is. But in addition to creating a government and prescribing the functions of its several parts, the Constitution of the United States marks off the field of civil liberty and guarantees the individual citizen against an invasion of his rights not only by another individual, but by the government itself. This is the one particular characteristic in which the Constitution of the United States is superior to any other. It is also the particular characteristic which makes it difficult for a European student or critic to understand. Walter Bagehot, the English publicist, complained that he could not find whereabouts in the government of the United States the sovereignty was placed. He could not find sovereignty in the American government simply because it is not there. The President is not sovereign, the Congress is not sovereign, the judiciary is not sovereign, all three together are not sovereign; their powers and duties are all marked out for them by the Constitution. The forty-six States which now compose the United States are none of them sovereign; they are all subject to the

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Constitution of the United States, and to the laws and treaties enacted and adopted in accordance therewith. The sovereignty is not to be found in the Constitution or under it, but behind it. It is vested in the people of the United States, who adopted the Constitution, acting through conventions of the people in the several States, and who may, if they choose, alter and amend it in ways which they have provided in the Constitution itself.

In other words, the government of the United States represents and controls but a part of the people's activities. Into the wide domain of the individual's civil liberty it may not enter, and that domain is a most important element of the life of the United States to-day. This explains why so much of the highest and best trained and most representative talent and ability of America are found outside of the government. The leaders of the country's education, bar, journalism, finance, commerce, and industry, not the government officials of the moment, are the most important and the most influential factors in American life. Only occasionally, as in the case of

Secretary Root or the late Governor Russell of Massachusetts, or a very few leading members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, do men of the highest intellectual and moral type enter the government service and remain in it. *The American as a Political Type*

There are many reasons for this regrettable fact, but it is mentioned now only to emphasize the point that in America the words "governmental" and "public" are by no means interchangeable. In America many undertakings, many policies, many men, are in every true sense of the word public, in that they represent the public and rest upon its will, without having any direct relation to the government at all.

Great, therefore, as is the unifying and uniting influence of the government of the United States, its policies and its activities, the unifying and uniting forces and influences outside of the government are more numerous and more powerful still. They are educational, social, and economic, and they are ceaselessly and tirelessly at work.

The provision of the Constitution that gave to the Congress the power "to regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several *Economic forces and the national life*

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States, and with the Indian tribes," has made it possible for the whole vast economic and industrial development of the nineteenth century to work directly toward uniting and unifying the American people. First water-power, then steam, then electricity; first roads, then canals, then railways; first individual manufacturers and traders, then companies, then huge corporations, have together brought about an industrial development and prosperity such as the world has never before seen. The statistics of agricultural production, of manufactures, and of transportation now reveal figures that are literally stupendous. The interstate commerce has risen to huge proportions. The tonnage passing the Sault Ste. Marie, the Detroit River, or the harbor of Buffalo, equals or exceeds that of ports like London, Liverpool, or Hamburg. The application of science to agriculture and mining steadily increases the return from these natural resources of the nation. Close study of the mechanical and financial problems connected with transportation steadily diminishes the cost and increases the safety of carrying goods from one part of the

country to another. Wages have risen both absolutely and relatively. The operation of the protective tariff, despite the just criticism that may be directed against some of its features, has been on the whole very favorable to the upbuilding and the diversification of industry, to the raising of wages and increasing the steadiness of employment, and to securing satisfactory returns for capital embarked in new enterprises. While the tariff will certainly undergo needed revision in the near future, no considerable body of opinion in either political party proposes seriously to overthrow it, or to reverse a political and economic policy that has now lasted for nearly half a century.

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The American people are essentially conservative. The persistence of the Constitution substantially unchanged is proof of the nation's conservatism. The Constitution persists because its founders, with almost superhuman wisdom, made it really a Constitution — a document of underlying principles freed from attempts at their detailed application — and not a code of laws; and because they made it conform to the settled

Conservatism
of the Ameri-
can people

*The
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habits of political thinking of the Anglo-Saxon colonists, who were the original builders of the nation. The moods and passions of a people, whether European or American, must never be permitted to overthrow the institutions which represent the historical development and expression of their deepest convictions. So the Constitution, interpreted by the judiciary, stands as sentinel over the hard-won civil liberty of the American branch of the Anglo-Saxon people and those others who have joined them, and prevents a passing wave of opinion, which commands a temporary majority, from subverting or damaging the foundations of the whole political structure.

**The rule
of the Con-
stitution**

Sometimes the superficial observer or the impatient advocate of a new proposal complains that the Constitution prevents genuinely popular government because of the fact that the limitations it imposes prevent his having his way. Such an one does not understand what the Constitution is or what popular government really means in the case of a great civilized people with civil liberty to protect and a part to play in the

progress of the world's life. For America at least it is the Constitution that makes genuinely popular government possible, and that protects the people from the rule of the changing, the fickle, and the cruel mob.

The American as a Political Type

It is an error to liken the position of the President of the United States to that of a sovereign in a constitutional monarchy. In a constitutional monarchy, the king holds an office; he is a sovereign only in name. The king is generally, in form at least, a part of the executive branch of the government, the other part being exercised by the prime minister or president of the council. This part of the executive power is closely related to, and often made by the constitution of the country dependent upon, the legislature. In the United States, conditions are quite different. The President is an organ of government, and he directly represents the sovereign people who choose him. He is entirely independent of the legislature, save through the process of impeachment. His powers and duties are those which the Constitution prescribes. He is not a king or the successor of kings. He is the nation's chief

The Presidency

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executive, separated by the terms of the Constitution from the nation's legislature, the Congress, as well as from the nation's judiciary, the United States Supreme Court and the inferior federal tribunals.

Therefore, a controversy between the President and the Congress is not parallel to a controversy between an absolute monarch and the legislature of his country, in which the representatives of the people are all on one side. It is a controversy between two of the people's representatives. The history of American politics shows clearly how thoroughly the people regard the President as their direct representative. At first this was not the case. More interest was taken in the election of Congressmen than in the election of a President. The controlling groups in the Congress really chose the early Presidents. At the election of 1820, when the slavery debates were in their early stages and when the whole country was enormously interested in them, only seventeen votes for President were cast in the city of Richmond, Virginia, which at that time had a population of more than twelve thousand. After

Andrew Jackson's time (1828-1836), however, there came a change, and for many years past the popular interest has centred in the election of the President. Without the President's co-operation and without the President's initiative no party can hope to carry its policies into effect, even if it has a large majority in the Congress. The power of the presidential office has steadily increased, not in opposition to the will of the people, but because of their will and their confidence in the presidents of their choosing.

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A word must be added in explanation of the independent and highly important position of the judiciary under the Constitution. "The judicial department," said John Marshall in the Virginia Convention of 1829, "comes home in its effect to every man's fireside: it passes on his property, his reputation, his life, his all. Is it not to the last degree important that he (the judge) should be rendered perfectly and completely independent, with nothing to control him but God and his conscience?"¹

**The judiciary
as an organ of
government**

¹ *Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia State Convention of 1829-30*, p. 616.

In England, and generally elsewhere, the judicial power is subordinate to the legislative, and as Chief Justice Taney remarked, the English courts must enforce an act of Parliament even if they believe that act to conflict with Magna Charta or the Petition of Rights. In the United States this is not the case. The Congress has only those powers that are delegated to it in the Constitution. The Federal courts, on the other hand, possess the full judicial power of the nation, unlimited and untrammelled, which power the Congress cannot invade or diminish. The Federal courts, therefore, have the right to determine whether or not the Congress has exceeded its powers in any given case. If they find that it has done so, the act in question is at once void and of no effect, because contrary to the Constitution. So the courts, too, as well as the President and the Congress, represent the people of the United States. They are not merely a part of the nation's administrative machinery, but, like the President and the Congress, they are an independent organ of government.

Most completely of all the organs of govern-

ment the courts represent the settled habits of thinking of the American people. A President may be, and at times is, powerfully influenced by the passions and clamor of the moment. The Federal courts are much less likely to be so influenced. The Congress may be stampeded by a popular outcry into passing some crude or unjust act. The Federal courts are there, in all their majesty, to decide whether the popular outcry has asked for and obtained something which runs counter to the constitutional guarantees of civil liberty and to the division of powers between nation and States. If so, the popular clamor cannot have what it thinks it wants. To override the Constitution would be revolution; orderly and rational change in its provisions can only take place by revision or amendment.

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Here we come upon the one most marked and distinguishing characteristic of the American form of government. Every immediate demand for political action is tested as to its validity by the standard of the fundamental principles of organized government to which the American

**A government
of principles,
not men**

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people give allegiance, and which their Constitution embodies. The test is made not by the President, however wise or however popular, or by the Congress, however cautious and however deliberate, but by the courts. It is made in accordance with well-settled and familiar principles of law and equity. It is this rule of law, of principles, not of men, which dominates all American political action. Every departure from it, every outburst against it, every violation of it, is not American; it is anti-American, abnormal and pathologic.

By considering these facts and the operation of the forces named, it can, perhaps, be understood how it is that, despite differences of climate as marked as those between Denmark and Greece, despite separation by distance greater than that between England and Siberia, despite variety of race origin greater than that of all Europe, the ninety millions of American people are at bottom a single and recognizable political type. On to one vigorous original tree many new and strange branches have been grafted, but the parent stem sustains and nourishes them all. Forces

of every kind, political, economic, social, and educational, have for more than a century enriched the soil in which the tree was planted and have helped it to its sturdy growth.

*The
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THE AMERICAN APART FROM HIS
GOVERNMENT

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. We assume the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different but incompatible things, called by the same name, liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names — liberty and tyranny. — ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

THE AMERICAN APART FROM HIS GOVERNMENT

THE Constitution of the United States, as has *The American apart from his Government* already been pointed out, not only erects a government and prescribes the functions of its several parts, but it defines the sphere of the individual's civil liberty and protects it. It is in this domain of civil liberty that by far the larger part of the American's life is carried on, and it is here that his peculiar traits and qualities are most fully and naturally manifested.

The average law-abiding American has but little *The American in the domain of liberty* to do with the government, and sees but few of its agents. Away from Washington or one of the larger centres of population, he sees no government official save the postmaster. The national government lays no direct tax upon him, and only in rare instances, and after attaining a certain local prominence, is he summoned to serve as juror in a United States court. Indeed,

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he sees but little more of the State government and its officers. Occasionally the State legislature enacts a law which directly affects him or his business, but not often. In fact, the whole system of government, national, State, and local, is represented to the ordinary rural dweller by the post office, and to his fellow in the city or town by the policeman and the fire department. The American has up to this time lived a life fairly free from official surveillance and control. He has been left to his own resources, and that very fact has been the making of him.

The tendency, strongly marked in every European country, to extend to the individual the increasingly paternal care and oversight of the government, is manifest in the United States as well, but it is so repugnant to American traditions, and so at war with the principles that have made America what it is, that every proposal for its advance is strongly resisted. So long as developments of this kind confine themselves to safeguarding the public health, to preventing manifest injustice and fraud, and to limiting law-given privilege, they can, however, readily be defended

and justified; for we have passed forever beyond the rule of *laissez-faire*. But when they attempt to regulate and curtail private business, to limit personal fortunes for purely punitive purposes, and to spy upon the private life of individuals, they are so obnoxious to the American instinct that they will not be permitted by the people — until their national character is wholly changed — even if measures of such a kind could successfully pass the scrutiny of the courts.

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The American is self-reliant by nature and by tradition. His forefathers braved the dangers of the unknown seas and the risks of a strange and unsettled land in order to try their fortunes on the other side of the world. Even to-day it is the Lithuanian, the Italian, or the Scandinavian of imagination and energy, and not the opposite type, who leaves his old home, and makes part of the tide of emigration to America. This self-reliance and independence manifest themselves in many ways. They make forever impossible the establishment of any fixed and permanent social and economic classes in America. Almost without exception the men who to-day

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occupy the most conspicuous positions in the United States have worked their way up, by their own ability, from very humble beginnings. The heads of the great universities were every one of them not long ago humble and poorly compensated teachers. The most distinguished judges began life as struggling barristers with their own way to make. Nineteen of the men who to-day direct the great transportation systems of the country, and who command very large salaries, were, in every case, a short generation ago, wage-earners of the humblest kind in the service of one or another of the railway companies.¹ This unlimited opportunity to rise, and to rise young, acts as a perpetual stimulus to the American youth, and spurs him on to master some calling or career. It is a spur to ambition and an incentive to hard work. No observation of American life is correct and no prediction in regard to its future will be justified that proceeds upon the assumption that there are in America fixed and stable economic classes.

¹ *Harper's Weekly*, New York, June 20, 1908, p. 12.

This explains why teachers of the socialistic philosophy find so much difficulty in arousing a feeling of class consciousness among the wage-earners of the United States, for the wage-earners have no possible intention of remaining such if they can help it, and they look forward with certainty to having their children, well trained in the public schools, gain positions as independent property owners or employers. They see examples of such changes all about them, and hope equally to profit by the opportunities that American life affords.

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The opportunities of American life

Because the American has been so successful in acquiring a fortune, because so many men have risen from the smallest possible beginnings to the possession of great riches, and because the country as a whole is so enormously wealthy, the American is generally supposed by Europeans and by not a few Americans who are but superficial observers of their own people, to be given over to money-getting, and to be enamoured of money for its own sake. Nothing could be farther from the fact. The American cares much less for money than the Frenchman, less even than the Englishman or the

Attitude toward money

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German. His main ambition is successful self-expression, the putting forth of all his powers in order to gain a desired end, or to accomplish a difficult purpose. The money that comes with success of this kind the American takes gladly as the outward and visible sign and measure of what he has done. But the money itself he treats as a toy, or — if of finer moral calibre — as a trust, to be in some way administered for the public good, after making provision for his own family. This is the reason of the constant stream of benefactions, great and small, in the United States. Universities, colleges, hospitals, asylums, libraries, public undertakings and memorials of every kind are founded and supported by private benefactions of this sort.

The ethical and political value of this state of affairs is very great. The sense of responsibility for the administration of great wealth, and the sense of obligation in regard to it, are valuable moral assets for any nation. The political and economic system which opens the way to individual self-expression and achievement of every kind, which assures to each individual the un-

disturbed possession of the fruits of his own efforts, and which develops in him a sense of obligation to the community for the proper use and expenditure of his gains, is far preferable to one which commits the political and economic injustice of adjusting the rewards to needs and to desires, instead of to achievements, in the hope that thereby equality and happiness — a false equality and an illusory happiness — will be promoted.

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Contrary, perhaps, to common belief, the American has a highly emotional temperament. His so-called practicality is in part tempered and in part controlled by warmth of feeling and a persistent idealism that are very remarkable. It was not practicality but idealism that settled the Atlantic seaboard. It was not practicality but idealism that pushed out across the Alleghany Mountains, bridging rivers, felling forests, ploughing prairies, building homes, and opening a new world to settlement and to civilization. The American will sacrifice any amount of money, undergo any privation or suffering, put forth any effort, for his beliefs. The Civil War proved that

The American's emotional temperament

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beyond peradventure. It is commonplace, too, that he responds quickly and sympathetically to a noble idea or a lofty sentiment. In the literature of his own language, he is touched and moved by the best, both in poetry and in prose.

The American people show their best and finest qualities in time of great national grief and sorrow. During the long dreary weeks when President Garfield lay dying, and again when President McKinley was shot, the emotional temper of the people was so splendid as to be awe-inspiring. On the other hand, the unreasoning outburst of blind rage and hate which followed the blowing up of the battleship *Maine*, in the harbor of Havana, just before the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, was something to be heartily ashamed of.

Because of this strongly emotional temper great waves of political interest and feeling sweep over the body politic in a way that astounds and disconcerts the observer who is used to more intellectual processes. Examples of these waves are the so-called granger and greenback movements of the 70's, the Free-silver movement of

the 80's and 90's, as well as the movements of *The*
to-day against the trusts, and in favor of the *American*
prohibition of the liquor traffic. The process in *apart*
all these matters is one and the same. A real *from his*
grievance or abuse, more or less severe, exists, *Government*
and for it some person or party proposes a prompt
and plausible remedy. In their anxiety to bring
the grievance or abuse to an end, large numbers
of people grasp eagerly at the proffered remedy
and become ardent in its support. The current
of feeling runs on like a torrent, but gradually
the intellect asserts itself, and after careful dis-
cussion and examination, the proposed remedy
for the grievance or abuse is accepted in a modi-
fied form, or rejected entirely. In all these
experiences the dangerous moment comes when
ambitious demagogues, apt at inflammatory
speech, try to use the people's aroused feelings
as a means to gain position and power for them-
selves. This exploitation of the people is a danger
inherent in all democracies. There is no safe-
guard against it but the native good sense and the
firm hold on political principle of the people
themselves.

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*The Americans
a Christian
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He would be but a poor observer of the American people who failed to take note of the strong hold which religious belief has upon them. Christianity in some one of its many forms is a part of their nature. Undoubtedly the religious observance of Sunday and church-going are not so universal as they once were, particularly in the more populous communities; yet for the most part not to have some church connection is held to be as lacking in respectability as not to have a regular occupation. There are in the United States one hundred and sixty thousand ministers of religion, more than two hundred thousand church buildings, and over thirty-two million communicants. In small villages and in rural districts, and to some extent elsewhere, the church is the social as well as the religious centre. The clergy in the rural districts almost uniformly exercise a strong influence over their parishioners in all matters. Religious groupings in the South, and often in the West also, are the basis of social classification. Certainly religious forms persist even if beliefs are weakened or altered. All important political conventions are opened with

prayer. The daily sessions of the Senate and House of Representatives and of many State legislatures are opened with prayer. Chaplains are provided by law for the army and navy.

This religious influence and this regard for the Christian religion go back to the very beginning of American history. They may be found in the commission given by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to Columbus, in that issued by Queen Elizabeth of England to Sir Walter Raleigh, in the first charter of Virginia, in the Compact by the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower*, in the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, in the Charter of Privileges granted by William Penn to the Province of Pennsylvania, in the Declaration of Independence, and in the constitutions of the several States. The United States Supreme Court, speaking by Mr. Justice Brewer, has declared the religious character of the American people in no uncertain terms. The Court said ¹: —

“If we pass beyond these matters to a view of American life as expressed by its laws, its business, its customs, and its society, we find everywhere

¹ Holy Trinity Church v. United States, 143 U. S. (1891).

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a clear recognition of the same truth. Among other matters note the following: The form of oath universally prevailing, concluding with an appeal to the Almighty; the custom of opening sessions of all deliberative bodies with prayer; the prefatory words of all wills, 'In the name of God, Amen'; the laws respecting the observance of the Sabbath, with a general cessation of all secular business, and the closing of courts, legislatures, and other similar public assemblies on that day; the churches and church organizations which abound in every city, town, and hamlet; the multitude of charitable organizations existing everywhere under Christian auspices; the gigantic missionary associations, with general support, and aiming to establish Christian missions in every quarter of the globe. These and many other matters which might be noticed add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation."

There is of course no established church in the United States, and no legal or official preference of one form of religious belief to another. The fact remains nevertheless, as the Supreme Court

has said, that the United States is a Christian nation. After taking into consideration the absolute religious tolerance that prevails, it is still true that the religion of the Jew, the Mahometan, or the Confucian does not have and cannot have the same place and influence in American life as the religion of the Christian. The United States is both in law and in fact a Christian nation, and it would be so even if a majority of its inhabitants were not — as they are — adherents of some form of the Christian faith. It is so, despite the fact that a very large number of its inhabitants profess no form of the Christian faith whatsoever. To say that the United States is in law and in fact a Christian nation means that the whole point of view of the people, as well as their institutions and traditions, are those which have been developed under the dominance of the Christian faith, first in Western Europe and then in America, and because of that dominance. The legal calendar is the Christian calendar, and it is inconceivable that there should be any other.

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On the other hand, the United States is a country in which there is complete separation between

Religious freedom

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church and state, and which is happily catholic in spirit, and hospitable to citizens of every race and every creed. Therefore, care is always taken to observe the constitutional guarantee that the free exercise of religion shall not be prohibited, and the adherents of any given creed, however divergent from Christianity, are allowed to live in accordance with their traditions and convictions, provided only that in so doing they do not come in conflict with the laws of the land. It is because of this policy that Mormons are permitted to live in the United States, while their practice of polygamy is now prohibited.

That this attitude of the people of the United States is not inimical to the interests of religious bodies is proved both by the fact that these bodies are wholly satisfied with it, and that they thrive under it. The many vexatious problems that under modern conditions confront an established church are wholly avoided, and the churches each and all grow and flourish. Perhaps nowhere in the world is the Roman Catholic church so fortunately situated as in the United States; that it is able to stand without state support, its more than

ten million communicants in the United States
amply prove.

The standards of business honor, as well as
those of business efficiency, are very high in the
United States. The credit system is widely
extended, and it rarely results in serious loss.

The people have invested their savings very largely
in the stocks and bonds of railways and industrial
corporations, in most cases to their profit and
great advantage. The financial, operating, and
manufacturing managers of these corporations
are almost without exception men of unusual
ability, great technical knowledge and skill,
and scrupulous honesty. Such huge under-
takings as the United States Steel Corporation,
the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, and the
Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company
are models of good management and fair dealing.
Their size and the character of their business
makes them really public, not private, organiza-
tions. Yet, of course, they are in no sense gov-
ernmental.

In a period of rapidly expanding business activ-
ity and great accumulation of wealth, such as have

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marked the history of the United States since the Civil War, some adventurers, speculators, and exploiters have found themselves in prominent places of trust and responsibility. Some such — not many, in reality a very few — have misused their opportunities and betrayed their trust. This fact has been carried all over the world, and the wholly unjustifiable inference has been drawn that in America business honor and business honesty are at a low ebb. The contrary is the case. New York, which now rivals London in financial importance, administers hundreds of millions of trust funds and deposits with scrupulous honesty and fairness. The heads and directors of the leading banks, trust companies, and commercial houses of New York are among the best known and most honored of American citizens. They hold fast with jealous care to the high traditions of honor and conservatism which have lasted for more than a century.

Similar conditions exist in other parts of the country. The local banker in a village or small town in the interior is almost certainly a man of high repute and public spirit. He is proud of

his community and solicitous for its welfare and growth. The same is true of the mercantile classes. Of the whole vast business of the United States it is estimated that only five per cent, one-twentieth part, is settled for with cash payments. The remaining nineteen-twentieths is settled for by bank checks or other instruments of credit. This would not be possible in a country whose banking and commercial class were tricky and dishonest.

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Despite his material success, the American has still much to learn about the conduct of business, particularly with foreign nations. He is apt to confuse attention to business with physical presence at his office or factory. He has yet to learn that twelve months' work may be done in ten months or even in eleven, but that it cannot possibly be done in twelve. Relaxation, outdoor life, physical exercise, and change of scene refresh and invigorate both mind and body, and thereby contribute to business efficiency. This lesson is being learned by Americans, but slowly. Nor have American business men mastered to any large extent the secret of carrying on a successful

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foreign trade. To make what the buyer wants, not what the manufacturer prefers or thinks the buyer ought to have, must become the controlling principle. Buyers in other countries have their own strong preferences as to style, marks, and forms of packing. The American trader often neglects these details, and fails thereby to compete successfully with his English or his German trade rival. But he is learning rapidly, as the mounting value of the manufactured goods exported from the United States plainly indicates.

**The large
corporations**

The organization of the large corporations, popularly but quite improperly known as trusts, has given a strong impetus to business efficiency in America. They have greatly reduced waste in production, and they have increased productiveness while generally reducing the price of the commodities in which they deal. They have opened new and much more lucrative avenues of employment to men of capacity and zeal. They have excited the animosity of the small because they are big, and they have incurred widespread public hostility because their managers have sometimes interfered in matters of legislation, or

have tried to secure special and unfair advantages from the common carriers. These abuses, however, are now correcting themselves, or are being corrected, and public sentiment in regard to the large corporations may reasonably be expected to change. The large corporations are both a legitimate and a necessary outgrowth of modern economic conditions as these exist in the United States, and the balance of advantage and disadvantage is largely in their favor, provided only that they be restrained from using their great strength inequitably or from damaging some other and more important public interest. A corporation is coöperative, and coöperation is the best use an individual can make of his individuality.

Some years ago a distinguished Englishman visited the United States, and spent the first three weeks of his stay in Boston and then three weeks in New York. Shortly before sailing for home he expressed his intention of writing a book about the country whose hospitality he had so much enjoyed, and was greatly surprised when an American friend remarked: "You cannot possibly write a book about the United States; you

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The West as representative of the United States

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have not been to the United States at all; you have only visited New York and Boston.” Though spoken in jest, these words convey a truth that is almost always overlooked. While New York and Boston are, of course, genuinely American, yet they are so near to Europe, and their relations with Europe are so many and so close, that a visit to them does not suffice to give to the visitor either an accurate or a complete impression of American life and of the American habit of mind. The American type is seen at its purest and best in any one of the hundred or more small cities and towns in the Middle West. If one were to select a restricted area in which to study American life and American characteristics, he would do best to choose northern Illinois and the adjacent parts of Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Here the soil is rich, the settlements are old enough to have an aspect of comfort and order, the population is well-to-do, there is little or no extreme poverty, the public schools are of the best, churches abound and are strong in influence, and the average of intelligence and of intellectual interest is very high. Here Europe

is perfectly familiar, but not quite so adjacent as *The American apart from his Government* in New York or Boston. The population read the best books, and take in the best magazines, reviews, and weekly journals. The boys and girls are sent to college almost as a matter of course, usually in the tax-supported State universities. There is little vice and less crime, and both the manners and morals of the people are excellent. In Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, California, and elsewhere, similar conditions abound, but the particular part of the country that has been named may justly be taken as truly American in a representative sense.

The traveller through the United States who is so fortunate as to meet with really representative men in their homes and clubs, who is not restricted merely to seeing the country and the people in hotels and through the windows of a railway car, cannot fail to be impressed by their general mental alertness, by their wide and accurate information as to men and things in other countries, by their knowledge of literature and scientific progress, and by their fairness and openness of mind. The

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old-time American habit of decrying all languages, all countries, and all culture not its own, is wearing away. That habit marked a provincial self-assertive state of mind which not unnaturally succeeded one of colonial subordination and dependence. This growth from colonial subordination to a provincial self-assertiveness was assisted by what Lowell calls a certain habit of condescension in foreigners.

While the spread of intelligence results in quite too hasty judgment of men and events, yet that same spread of intelligence provides the means for correcting such hasty judgments. Travel broadens the American's view of life and helps him to the material for a comparative study of his social and political problems. Of late the references in the Congressional debates to the experience of other nations in matters of finance and corporate control and in regard to the relations between capital and labor, have increased greatly both in number and in understanding. The American of to-day feels himself decidedly a citizen of the world, and not, as was once the case, a citizen of a world apart. He is now sen-

sitive to foreign criticism and appreciative of foreign approval and commendation. This is a rather recent development, and one which marks a distinct step forward in civilization. To stand in isolation is to cut one's self off from the privilege of serving or of being served.

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The dangers which America may yet encounter will not be those which the older peoples fear. Economic pressure from without could have no serious effects; the nation's consuming power is too great and its natural resources too varied and too extensive. An offensive war against the United States is almost unthinkable: first, because it would certainly be futile, and, secondly, because we are rapidly reaching a plane of civilization where self-respecting nations will not go to war with each other.

Possible dangers to American civilization

The dangers which confront America are quite different, and will come, if at all, from within. The original and persistent Anglo-Saxon impulse, now nearly two thousand years old, may conceivably lose its force. Its capacity to subdue and to assimilate the alien elements brought to it by immigration may possibly be exhausted. A

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generation forgetful of the fundamental principles upon which the nation was built, may in a fit of passion or of temper follow a popular but shallow leader over a political precipice. The reverence and regard for law which alone make a civilized state and free institutions possible may yield to passionate violence and to lawless vengeance, in forgetfulness of Lincoln's fine maxim, "There is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law." No one of these dangers is imminent, but it would be simple blindness not to realize that they are possible.

**The warning
of Washing-
ton**

One of the wisest and most illuminating documents of American history is the farewell address which Washington addressed to his countrymen in 1796, when about to retire from the Presidency. It is the fortunate custom in the United States Senate to cause the farewell address to be read aloud by a senator on each recurring anniversary of Washington's birthday. That address, which mingles the wisdom of Washington with the profound insight of Hamilton, points out to Americans where their path of safety as a nation lies. With especial emphasis, Washington counsels

the spirit of obedience to law because it is the law, and not merely if and because a law meets the approval of the individual upon whom the duty of obedience rests. He points to a spirit of lawlessness as a means of substituting the will of a party or faction for the delegated will of the nation; and that party or faction often only a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community. This is an ever-present danger in the United States. Small groups exert themselves vigorously to obtain certain acts of legislation, acts sometimes desirable in the public interest, but more often in aid or protection of a selfish or a special interest. Perhaps they succeed in their effort, and so impose upon the community a policy which it does not want or approve, but which a majority of its representatives had not the wit or the skill to defeat. This law and a hundred like it fall into disuse or are openly violated, and so operate to spread abroad a disregard or contempt for the law as such. The large number of legislative bodies in the United States, the passion of many of the people for legislating in regard to all sorts and kinds of things that legislation had better

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leave alone, and the ease with which much legislation of a certain kind is accomplished, are all causes coöperating to weaken respect for law and the law-abiding spirit.

It is proper to say that outbursts of lawlessness and disorder, while still numerous and shocking, are increasingly infrequent. Anything like the Draft Riots of 1863 in the city of New York would now be impossible. President Cleveland's vigorous and patriotic handling of the outbreak at Chicago in 1894, over the heads of the local and State officials who were in sympathy with the disorderly classes, was a memorable act and one which makes any repetition of that offence most unlikely. Lynching still continues alike in the South — where the problem is complicated by strong race antagonism — and in some parts of the North; but public sentiment and public officials are much more vigorous in preventing and in punishing such crimes than they once were.

*The law-abid-
ing spirit*

To obey the law because it is the law and to labor for its alteration or repeal in an orderly way if any given law is repugnant to one's sense of justice, is the first and chief lesson for the

American parent and the American school to teach the children of to-day who are to be the responsible American citizens of to-morrow. No one ever stated the dangers of a spread of the spirit of lawlessness better than Lincoln himself. "I know the American people are much attached to their government," he said. "I know they would suffer much for its sake; I know they would endure evils long and patiently before they would ever think of exchanging it for another, — yet, notwithstanding all this, if the laws be continually despised and disregarded, if their rights to be secure in their persons and property are held by no better tenure than the caprice of a mob, the alienation of their affections from the government is the natural consequence; and to that, sooner or later, it must come." ¹

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The only alternative to a spirit of obedience to law for its own sake, is the man on horseback.

But the American finds protection against the dangers which might easily threaten his civilization, in his natural cheerfulness, his unabated

¹ *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Nicolay and Hay (1902), I : 11-12.

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self-confidence, and his natural optimism. He cannot be persuaded that come what may, things will not turn out well, and if necessary, he will put his sturdy shoulder to the wheel, and see that they do turn out well. He rises to a crisis of any kind, whether in his personal or family fortunes, or in public affairs, with surprising good humor, readiness, and skill. He rarely remains defeated long. So far as his political institutions are concerned, his confidence in them is such that in his heart, no matter what dolorous language he may use in the exigencies of a political contest, he does not believe that even his most distrusted political opponent can really injure or overturn them.

**The mob and
the people**

In a democracy, the line between the mob and the people is a narrow one. The same individuals compose both the mob and the people. When reason is unhinged by passion, and when appetite rules the will, then the people are the mob. When intelligent reflection asserts itself and when action is based on principle, then the mob becomes the people. Just because this line between the mob and the people is so narrow, the responsibility attached to leadership in the American

democracy is correspondingly heavy. Violent and inconsidered speech, appeals addressed to the appetites of men and to their baser natures, exhortations that lead to envy and jealousy of those who have gained just distinction or earned honest wealth, are all appeals not to the people, but to the mob. He who really, not merely verbally and vocally, puts his trust in the people, trusts their higher instincts and makes his appeal to them. Such a leader clearly and patiently expounds principles and illustrates them. He urges policies on grounds of justice, mercy, national benefit; he never tries to develop a class consciousness as opposed to a consciousness of common citizenship, much less attempts to array class against class. He hears all sides, and acts as his conscience and his reason alone dictate. The greatest triumph of the American people is to have produced such a leader, to have followed him through the Valley of the Shadow of national death, and to revere increasingly his memory. He was Abraham Lincoln.

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THE AMERICAN AND THE
INTELLECTUAL LIFE

Culture is the suggestion, from certain best thoughts, that a man has a range of affinities through which he can modulate the violence of any master-tones that have a droning preponderance in his scale, and succor him against himself. Culture redresses the balance, puts him among his equals and superiors, revives the delicious sense of sympathy and warns him of the dangers of solitude and repulsion. — RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

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ON July 4, 1778, in the first oration known to have been delivered in the United States in commemoration of the nation's independence and on the anniversary of its declaration, David Ramsay, a distinguished South Carolina publicist and man of letters, predicted that literature would flourish in America and that American independence would mark an illustrious epoch, remarkable for the spreading and improvement of science. Already, he pointed out, a zeal for promoting learning, hitherto unknown, had begun to overspread the United States. What has been the result? How far have these prophecies been justified?

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By common consent the United States has taken a place among the most enlightened and cultivated nations of the earth. This follows, however, by no means from the wide distribution

**The basis of
culture in
America**

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of wealth and material comfort; for those conditions are entirely compatible with a sluggish and inert civilization of the higher sort. Nor does it follow altogether from the free and liberal character of the country's political and economic institutions; for they may be abused as well as used. It results, rather, from an intense devotion to high intellectual and moral ideals, and to a never-failing faith in the power of education to promote both individual and national happiness, efficiency, and virtue. The American people are almost Socratic in their acceptance of the principle that knowledge will lead to right and useful action and conduct. History has done much to dispel the illusion that Socrates cherished, for knowledge and virtue are certainly not interchangeable terms. The American people, nevertheless, have an almost fanatical belief in education because of the practical results which they feel certain will flow from it. In large measure these expected practical results do flow from education, and if the formula be not pressed too far, the American conviction as to education is quite defensible.

Behind all this lies the fundamental and original Puritanism which gives so much of its form to American life. It is a Puritanism, transformed, overlaid, and warmed into a more generous glow, but still it is Puritanism. Puritanism built New England, and for nearly a hundred years New England powerfully influenced the United States. If New England now seems isolated and provincial, and if its identity is almost lost through the admixture of large Irish and French-Canadian elements in the population, yet the fact must never be overlooked that New England Puritanism, built on the rock of Geneva, is the secure theological and philosophical foundation on which all that is distinctive in American life and culture has been built. No philosophy of life has been so influential in America as that of John Calvin. This fact explains much of the narrowness and lack of sympathy with strange customs and views which one observes among Americans, and it explains also much of the determination and energy of the American temperament. Devotion to duty for its own sake and a determination to persevere to the end in any undertaking simply

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The under-
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**The great
Americans**

because it has been undertaken, are almost universal American applications of Calvinism. The ideal has always influenced the American more than the material, but he manifests grim and ill-concealed satisfaction when the pursuit of his ideal brings with it a material reward.

While American conditions have been extremely favorable to individual initiative and accomplishment, and while the average of accomplishment, taking the whole population into account, is high, yet achievements of the very first class, judged by world standards, have not been numerous in America. If the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were searched for great spirits and great intelligences of the highest rank, America could furnish perhaps ten, — not altogether a bad showing for a people so new, with economic and political tasks of such magnitude pressing for accomplishment, which tasks, almost of necessity, drew the highest talent to themselves, and away from science, art, and letters. These ten would, in my judgment, be Jonathan Edwards, philosopher and theologian; Benjamin Franklin, man of the world; George Washington, father of his country;

Alexander Hamilton, statesman and political philosopher; Thomas Jefferson, leader of the people; John Marshall, jurist; Daniel Webster, orator and publicist; Abraham Lincoln, whom Lowell significantly called "the first American"; Ralph Waldo Emerson, teacher of religion and morals; and Willard Gibbs, mathematician and physicist. Perhaps two other names should be added: Francis Parkman, historian, and William Dwight Whitney, philologist. Of these ten, Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Marshall, Webster, and Lincoln were the products of the nation's immediate needs, and take rank with the world's publicists and statesmen; while Edwards, Franklin, Emerson, and Gibbs — as well as Parkman and Whitney — were all of the reflective type of mind, and are to be classed with the world's men of letters, philosophers, and men of science.

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The reflective product of America, outside of the field of political science, is thus far, not unnaturally, small. In the fine arts, too, with the noteworthy exception of architecture, the American contributions must be admitted to be either frankly imitative or clearly to fall short of the

**Art and
architecture**

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highest excellence. The sculpture of Saint Gaudens and the stained glass of La Farge, both of which are of marked distinction, stand out as noteworthy exceptions. With architecture, however, the case is different. Richardson, Hunt, and McKim have led the way to an important art movement in architecture, and the past generation has witnessed a remarkable outburst of originality and inventiveness, particularly in the interweaving of design with problems of engineering and construction, which is evidence of real power and of the possession of a genuinely artistic imagination.

Art feeds on things artistic. Much may therefore be expected from the significant collections of paintings, sculpture, and other art objects that are now being rapidly brought together in the great museums of New York, Boston, and Chicago, and to a lesser degree elsewhere, as well as from the important collections of private individuals in all parts of the country.

**Scientific
activity**

Scientific inquiry and the application of scientific discovery to industry and art are eagerly pursued in America and with marked success.

The universities have been most hospitable to the new scientific movement, and the government has fostered it generously and in many ways. For almost every department of scientific activity the United States can to-day furnish representatives whose work is everywhere recognized as contributing to scientific advance and whose distinction is equal to that of their fellow-workers in other countries.

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De Tocqueville expressed the opinion that the very structure of a democratic society is unsuited to meditation and inimical to it. This is certainly true if one's observation or attention be confined to a democratic society in the making; for then the pressure and struggle for power and for gain, the unending tumult which accompanies the task of economic and political organization, and the practical interpretation of underlying formulas and principles, as well as the novelty of the conditions of life, all unite to compel the attention outward, and to make reflection an impossible luxury. Only a Hegel could pursue the course of his abstruse meditations uninterrupted, with the guns of Jena sounding in his ears. But after

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theoretical
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a democratic state of society has established itself, and traditions have become fixed, there seems no reason to believe that reflection and meditation will not then take and hold the commanding place which they have always held among civilized men. Certainly the history of the American universities justifies this expectation. Philosophy is now, and for some time past has been, one of the favorite studies at the American universities and colleges, and the reputation and productive activity of the teachers of philosophy at Columbia, Harvard, and California Universities, in particular, has drawn general attention to them as centres of reflective studies. Likewise the study of the theoretical aspects of economics, law, mathematics, physics, biology, and other departments of science is pursued by large numbers of students in America, and in time these studies must bear fruit. Epoch-making discoveries in science or contributions to philosophy of high importance are not made with great frequency, however. All Greece only produced one Plato and one Aristotle, and it was a far cry even from Descartes and Newton to Laplace.

The influence and importance of meditation and of reflective studies will increase in the United States as the people generally learn to distinguish between public noise and public service, between passing popularity and permanent worth. It takes some time for the masses in a democracy to learn this lesson. They are conscious of their power, they are not trained to reflection, they feel the pressure of immediate necessities, and they are quick to follow the leader who, having won their sympathy by his personality or by his acts, promises them the most. Popularity is, therefore, the path to immediate power, but it is a path strewn with dangers both to the leader and to the led. The believer in democracy cannot accept temporary popularity as a test of greatness in a leader; he must look rather to those basic principles on which the nation's institutions rest, and to their orderly and equitable development and application. Writing of Alexander Hamilton, his most recent biographer, with sure insight, has said: "A man who never disagrees with his countrymen, and who shrinks from unpopularity as the worst of all evils, can never have a share in

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Place of reflection in American life

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moulding the traditions of a virile race, though for a time he may make its fashions.”¹ In like spirit a contemporary statesman, speaking from the vantage ground of a unique public service in a most difficult post, has written: “Occasions do occur, which in these democratic days are becoming more, rather than less frequent, when the best service a government official can render to his country is to place himself in opposition to the public view. Indeed, if he feels certain that he is right, it is his bounden duty to do so, especially in respect to questions as to which public opinion is ill informed.”² A majority carries no moral weight because it is a majority, although it may, if it chooses, enforce its views and preferences by brute force. A majority carries moral weight only when it is right. A democracy learns this invaluable lesson only when it has first learned to give weight to the reflective habit of mind.

Popularity
versus worth

Educational
activity

The vast and unremitting educational activity in the United States, the constant and generous support of literary and scientific undertakings

¹ Oliver, *Alexander Hamilton*, p. 436.

² Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, I:438.

of every kind, and the increasing deference paid to the opinions of those who speak with the authority of knowledge, are all evidences that at bottom the American people do believe that reflection is a better guide for life than appetite. The demagogue is constantly telling those who will listen to him that the voice of the people is the voice of God, and that it is better to trust the instincts and common-sense of the masses to solve political and economic problems than to follow the guidance of the expert or to study the experience of other nations. Nevertheless, he sends his own children to school to learn the rudiments of the world's knowledge, and those who applaud his false teaching do the same. The demagogue is a by-product of democracy, not its fruit.

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Perhaps there is no surer indication of the progress of a modern people toward conscious dependence upon reflection instead of impulse, than the character and influence of a nation's universities. If the universities stand *vis-à-vis* to the nation; if they serve it and represent it in all possible ways; if their scholars are mature,

**Higher educa-
tion**

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well-trained, and devoted to the advancement of knowledge; if their students are drawn freely and widely from all classes in the community; and if the professions of law, medicine, divinity, teaching, and engineering are largely recruited from men trained in the universities, — then the nation is assuredly on the upward path, away from government and life by impulse and appetite, toward government and life by reflection and experience. That this is true of the United States cannot be doubted.

The history of the American universities is unique and significant. They are, perhaps, a dozen or fifteen in number, and they are, without exception, young and new. They are a development, under the guidance and stimulus of German example, out of the American college, which, in turn, was the New World's adaptation and development of the English Oxford and Cambridge, as those were in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Europe the usual divisions of the formal educational process are the elementary, the secondary, and the higher, or university stage. In America the corresponding divisions consist

of four stages, instead of three. These four are the elementary school, the secondary school, the college, and the university. In America the elementary school and the secondary school meet each other end to end, instead of overlapping as is usually the case in European countries. The American college in turn takes about two years of the work of the secondary school (Gymnasium, Real-Schule) as that institution is organized in Germany, for instance. As a result, the American secondary school has normally a four-year course and the college has normally one of equal length.

The college has been, is, and — it is greatly to be hoped — will continue to be, the central point and the foundation of higher education in America. The American college is the efficient representative of the tradition of liberal learning which took its rise early in the middle ages in the Faculty of Arts in the University of Paris, and which, handed on through Oxford and Cambridge, reached America in colonial days. Of nominal colleges there are in the United States several hundred, but the number of effective institutions which truly deserve and worthily bear the name

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**The American
college**

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is perhaps a hundred or a hundred and twenty. Scattered widely over the country, found in every State, these colleges reach with their instruction and their influence thousands of American youths each year, and send them into the world to take up their life-work with a new and more elevated outlook, and with minds and characters marked with the personal influence of devoted and scholarly teachers. In the college course the subjects usually taught are Greek and Latin, English, French, and German; history, economics, and philosophy; mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. The college confers upon its graduates the degree of bachelor, and the young alumnus goes, at twenty-one to twenty-three years of age, either into the practical work of life, or to a university to pursue more advanced or professional studies.

The popularity of the college in America, the extreme sacrifices made by many parents to give their children the advantage of a college education, the fact that the college students come literally from every class in the community, the influence of college traditions and ideals and of college

association in after life, all testify to the strong hold which scholarship and the life of reflection have upon the imagination of the American people. As the number of men and women who have enjoyed the privilege of college residence and college study increases, it will furnish the nation with a rapidly growing and influential body of citizenship, which will have a respect for the results of reflection and a confidence in them. These men and women will be a steadying influence of almost incalculable value, as the nation confronts its numerous and difficult problems of internal development and welfare. With his caustic wit, Lord Palmerston once said that if a little learning is a dangerous thing, no learning at all is more dangerous still. To open the way to a certain amount of liberal learning for large numbers of American youths is the self-imposed and, on the whole, the successfully executed task of the American college.

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While the American college goes back for its origin to the first half of the seventeenth century, the American university has come into existence during the past forty years. Here again, as in the

*The American
universities*

case of the college, the thing must be distinguished from the name. Since in the United States an educational institution may be either established and maintained by the government of one of the States or cities, or exist, with a general or a special charter, without direct government support or control, many institutions have taken the name University without any proper warrant whatever. Therefore, the number of nominal American universities is very large. The real universities, however, are easily recognized in Europe and America alike, and it is those only that are properly spoken of as the American universities.

The American universities are organized largely upon the German model. They have, however, adapted that model to the requirements of American life and to American administrative habits. With but insignificant exceptions, these universities have grown up out of colleges, and they retain colleges as part of their organization and work. The name University is consequently used in America in a twofold sense. It is used to designate either the whole educational activity of an institution properly called a university,

or it is used to designate the advanced, research, and professional work of such an institution, as distinguished from the collegiate or undergraduate instruction, which it also gives. This uncertainty of nomenclature makes a real difficulty, both for foreigners who wish to understand and estimate the American educational system, and for Americans themselves. It makes clear thinking about colleges and universities and their work, extremely difficult, and it is only proper to say that even intelligent Americans are themselves quite often confused by this confusion of names and things.

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To the universities fall, in chief part, the tasks of promoting research and publication in all departments of letters and of science, of training men and women for the work of scientific investigation, of preparing teachers for the higher posts, and of equipping the future lawyers, physicians, engineers, and architects for their professional careers. Ministers of religion, for reasons peculiar to American social and political history, have thus far been trained chiefly apart from the universities in seminaries maintained by the

several religious bodies. The time is likely to come, however, when the ministry will be relieved from this limitation and disadvantage, and when all the chief universities will either maintain theological faculties or ally theological seminaries with themselves.

The universities, too, render to the community, and often to the government as well, expert service of the highest and most useful kind, and they are fertile in devising both methods of extending their influence and ways and means of bringing a general knowledge of topics in literature, science, and art, to large numbers of the adult population.

The moral and intellectual influence of the universities, and of their representative scholars, is very great, and the universities themselves are generously, even munificently, supported. Some universities, especially in the Western States, are supported mainly by public tax; others, chiefly in the Eastern States, are supported by endowments and by the benefactions of individuals. The average of scholarship in American university teachers is very high, and the zeal for research produces annually hundreds of publications of

various sorts, not a few of which are of more than average merit.

While the American colleges were originally, and for the most part continue to be, situated in villages, towns, or small cities, the universities flourish most vigorously in the larger centres of population. The reason for this is plain, and Paris, Berlin, and Copenhagen are witnesses of its cogency. As Cardinal Newman once pointed out, a large city, particularly a metropolitan city, is peculiarly fitted to be the seat of a university. Thither are drawn, by an irresistible force, those personalities and those influences which, quite as much as direct formal instruction, stimulate and cultivate the mind of the student who has passed through the earlier stages of his educational career. There are to be found the great collections of books and of art, there are the opportunities to see the best dramas and to hear the best music. There, either as residents or as occasional visitors, are to be seen and heard the men who are leaders in the world's life and thought, and who most powerfully direct and influence public opinion. This explains why

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**The urban
movement in
America**

the most vigorous and productive American university life is to be found in New York and Chicago, and in the suburbs of Boston and San Francisco.

Under modern conditions of life and labor, the population of the United States is being drawn with increasing rapidity into cities, which the United States census officially interprets as communities having a population of 8000 or more. This means not only that university life, but all American activity, is becoming more and more urban in character. When the first United States census was taken in 1790 only about 130,000 persons, or 3.3 per cent of the whole population, dwelt in places having 8000 or more inhabitants, and there were only six such places in the country. When the twelfth census was taken in 1900, 25,000,000 persons, or over 33 per cent of the population, dwelt in places having 8000 or more inhabitants, and there were no fewer than 545 such places. There were at that time 38 cities having 100,000 or more inhabitants each. Free mail delivery in rural districts, the rapid extension of the farm telephone system, and the constant

improvement of the roads, all tend to make farm and village life more agreeable and less isolated; but still the rapid drift toward the cities goes on.

Curiously enough, this remarkable urban concentration and growth has taken place without deflecting the centre of the country's population appreciably from the parallel of latitude on which it was when the first census was taken. At that time the centre of population was 23 miles east of Baltimore, and just north of the 39th parallel of latitude. From that 39th parallel — about the latitude of Lisbon or Palermo — the centre of population has never moved more than a few miles in either direction, although it has travelled about 520 miles west, and in 1900 was in the immediate vicinity of the town of Columbus, Indiana. The nation has become much more urban and much more western in the century and more that has passed, but the population of 75,500,000 in 1900 was distributed on either side of the 39th parallel just as was the population of 4,000,000 in 1790.

These developments have powerfully affected the nation's history, and they have put a stamp

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New York as
the national
metropolis

upon its culture and upon its public opinion. Whatever else one sees of the United States, if he is to study its dominant and its representative characteristics, if he is to know its culture, he must know the greatest of its cities, New York, and he must know the West.

The highest culture — letters, art, science, social refinement — rests upon an economic basis, as does life itself. Intellectual vigor and dominance tread hard upon the heels of wealth and commercial supremacy. This was true in the ancient world and in the middle ages, and it is true still. The knowledge of how to use wealth follows, but does not precede, the possession of wealth itself. New York is the intellectual and the social capital of the United States, as it is the financial centre of the nation. Its immense masses of foreign-born citizens have not prevented a certain well-marked continuity in the history of New York ever since its commercial leadership was made secure by the opening of the Erie Canal and by the building of railroads.

There is a superficial generalization quite common to observers of America from abroad, that

Washington is the political capital, New York the commercial capital, and Boston the intellectual leader of American life. The small amount of truth which underlies this characterization sometimes conceals its essential falsity. Washington is the seat of government, but it is far from being a capital city as are London, Paris, and Berlin. Each year, however, it is taking on more and more of the attributes of a real capital, and it may well be that in time it will be a metropolis as well as the seat of government. Boston was the intellectual leader of America while and so long as its commercial prosperity was well marked and until the opening up of the great Western States to settlement completely altered the nation's centre of gravity, political and intellectual alike. Since the Civil War (1861-65) the intellectual eminence of Boston has declined both relatively and absolutely.

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That of New York, on the contrary, has steadily and rapidly increased. The membership of the Century, the Players, and the Authors' Clubs includes an astonishingly large proportion of the representative directive force and capacity of the

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nation in every part of the field of culture. Men of letters, artists, scientific investigators, scholars of every type, find themselves drawn in increasing numbers to New York, to share its cosmopolitan and urbane intellectual life, and to feel the stimulus of its friendly criticism. The opportunities which New York offers to men of capacity are literally boundless. It possesses, at Columbia University, one of the world's greatest companies of scholars, and, at its museums of Art and of Natural History, two extraordinary and increasingly valuable collections of art and science. It has been for many years a musical centre of the first rank. It is catholic in its tastes, warm in its appreciation of excellence, and generous almost to a fault. Contrary to a widespread impression, New York offers, in its citizenship, numerous instances of men who have turned their backs upon the more gainful occupations to which they have been solicited, in order to devote themselves to the career in education, in letters, in art, or in science, which most strongly appealed to them.

New York is so large and so many-sided and its intellectual activity is so widely diffused, that

the passing stranger is less strongly impressed by *The*
it than by the lesser but more compactly or- *American*
ganized intellectual life of a smaller place. The *and the*
vulgar and the bizarre happenings which are *Intellectual*
sometimes blazoned abroad as characteristic of *Life*
New York, are as infrequent as they are disagreeable, and they are no true index of the polished, refined, and highly intellectual social life of which New York is able to exhibit so much.

The West is a vague term which is only partly **The West**
geographical, partly political, and partly social, in its significance. It includes, generally speaking, the population living in Ohio, and the States west thereof to the Rocky Mountains, extending far enough south to include Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado. In the hands of this population lies the control of the political policy of the United States. When combined with the power and influence of New York, the West must always be irresistible.

The West is very apt to exaggerate the differences between itself and the population of the Eastern States. These differences are, in reality, more largely in modes of expression than in modes

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of thought. The West is freer from the wish to conform to conventions than the East, and its camaraderie is that of a population which has still about it the traditions of a pioneering period. The Western people are proud, intensely earnest, law-abiding, and ambitious in the highest degree for their sons and daughters. They are great readers of the best books and of the periodical literature of the day. They have developed, and are continually developing, writers and scholars as excellent as any in the land. They are well informed as to men and things abroad and independent in their judgments of them. The best critical literary newspaper in the country, *The Dial*, is published in Chicago, and one of the best-edited weekly journals, *The Argonaut*, is published in San Francisco. Among the universities in the West are some of the best and most active in America.

To know New York, therefore, and to comprehend the spirit of the West, are indispensable to an understanding of American civilization and American culture.

The South

The South, once politically dominant in the

United States, had led a life apart since the close of the Civil War, partly because of the war and its immediate political and economic results, partly because of the stupendous social problem it has had to face in the negro question. The economic results of the Civil War are rapidly giving way to a new industrial order, and in time the political results will, doubtless, similarly disappear. Only faith, patience, and courage can ever solve the negro question, and to that the South is now bravely addressing itself. The South is intensely American, and its social life reflects a charm and a grace that are all its own. The time will come when the South, too, will bear its full share in the upbuilding of the intellectual life in America.

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The dwellers beyond the Rocky Mountains in the States of the Pacific slope have more characteristics in common with the Eastern than with the Western States. So solid is their civilization, so keen their intellectual activity, and so substantial their achievements in letters, in science, and in art, that it is hard to believe how young these States are in years.

*The Pacific
slope*

The Americans are now the most considerable

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**The English
language in
America**

body of English-speaking people in the world. Despite their numbers and their wide geographical distribution, their English speech is more nearly uniform than that of the inhabitants of England itself. No differences of intonation, accent, or vocabulary in the United States are so great as those between the Yorkshireman and the Cornishman, or between the dwellers in Westmoreland and those in Devon. Many so-called Americanisms are only survivals of sixteenth and seventeenth century English usages which have disappeared in the mother country. The exaggerated drawl of many Englishmen is as far from being good English as is the nasal twang of the uncultivated American. The purity of the language must rest with the educated classes who use the English speech and with the makers of its literature, and it is as safe on one side of the Atlantic as on the other. The fact is not without significance that until the appearance of the monumental dictionary now passing through the Oxford University Press, the best modern dictionaries of the English language were the work of American scholars.

The richest and most elegant modern prose is *The American and the Intellectual Life* that of the French academicians and of the English scholars trained under the classical traditions of Oxford and of Cambridge. Few Americans write so well as either of these, and if the classical tradition farther weakens in the American colleges and universities, or perishes altogether, there will be fewer still in years to come. Only occasionally is an American book of even exceptional scholarship really well written. When it is both of genuine scholarship and well written, it finds readers and influences opinion very quickly, in Europe as well as in America.

The American literary tradition centres largely about New York and Boston. Irving, Cooper, Bryant, Poe, Curtis, and Stedman belong to New York. Whittier, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Emerson, Holmes, and Lowell belong to Boston. Whitman stands outside both, as do the few names that one remembers from the South, the West, and the Pacific slope. Of these Poe was the first to win a European reputation, and Poe and Whitman are the most read and the most admired in other countries. These writers, and others less cele-

**American
literature**

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brated, have made a very respectable contribution to the literature of the English language during the nineteenth century.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to justify, in considerable measure, the predictions of David Ramsay. If the intellectual history of America is not yet illustrious, it is dignified, serious, and significant. Neither the political contests nor the economic struggles of a new people in a new land have checked the tendency inborn in man to express his nature, his aspirations, and his reflections, in the forms of science, of letters, and of art. The American's devotion to education, and his zeal and generosity in its behalf, are quite without precedent. The intellectual life is familiar in America, and its power and influence will steadily increase.

*The typical
American*

Who is this American who, whatever his limitations and his faults, has so many excellent traits and so fine a nature? He is not the man who, suddenly grown rich, disports himself vulgarly in the public gaze; he is not the boastful Philistine, who is ignorant of the world's civilization,

and despises what he not does not know; he is not the decadent of the large cities who wastes his patrimony and his life in excess and frivolity. All these exist in America, but their notoriety is unfortunately out of all proportion to their numbers. The typical American is he who, whether rich or poor, whether dwelling in the North, South, East, or West, whether scholar, professional man, merchant, manufacturer, farmer, or skilled worker for wages, lives the life of a good citizen and a good neighbor; who believes loyally and with all his heart in his country's institutions, and in the underlying principles on which these institutions are built; who directs both his private and his public life by sound principles; who cherishes high ideals; and who aims to train his children for a useful life and for their country's service. These, and not the accidental and unusual types, are the Americans of whom I speak. Fortunately, there are many millions of them in the United States.

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